

Wednesday, March 8, 1978

The Washington Star A-9

# Sen. Tower Temporarily Off Ethics Panel Due to Possible Link to Influence Probe

By Walter Taylor  
Washington Star Staff Writer

Sen. John Tower has temporarily left the Senate Ethics Committee after the panel requested some of his records in its investigation of Korean influence-buying on Capitol Hill.

Tower, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, stepped down under provisions that make any member of the ethics panel "ineligible to participate in any initial review or investigation relating to his own conduct."

Without formal announcement of the action by the committee, the Senate last week quietly approved the appointment of Sen. James B. Pearson, R-Kan., to replace Tower for the remainder of the Korean investigation.

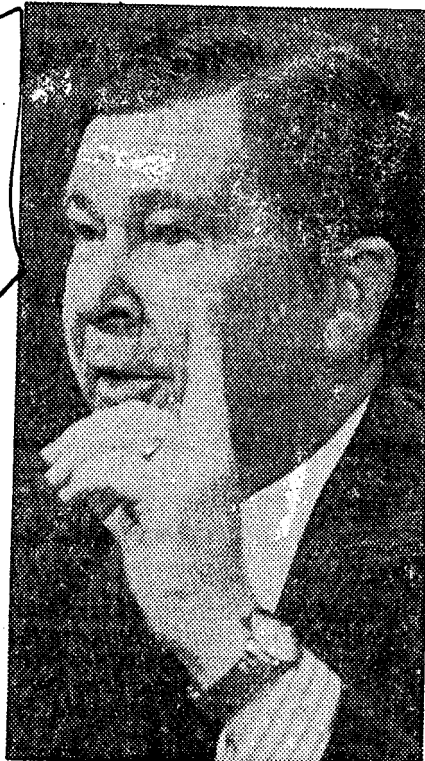
Last Thursday's Congressional Record notes the appointment of Pearson "solely for the purpose of such initial review or investigations as to which the senator from Texas (Mr. Tower) has disqualified himself."

**IN RESPONSE** to reporters' inquiries, the committee chairman, Sen. Adlai Stevenson, D-Ill., issued a brief statement through his office saying that "no charges" had been brought against Tower in the Korean probe and that there had been "no suggestion by the committee or its staff that he is guilty of any impropriety of any kind."

Both Stevenson's office and Tower suggested initially that the Texas Republican had voluntarily stepped down.

Other sources on the committee indicated, however, that under Senate rules, Tower had no choice but to excuse himself during the remainder of the Korean investigation.

Tower, it was learned, was one of a number of senators whose records are being scrutinized by the special staff that has been conducting the committee's investigation thus far. Tower, it was said, has been cooperating fully with the staff and has turned over all records that have been requested.



SEN. JOHN TOWER

**THE NATURE** OF the documents requested by the committee could not be learned. Tower declined to identify them, citing a policy of the committee against discussing the substance of the investigation.

Sen. Harrison H. Schmitt, R-N.M., the senior Republican on the bipartisan ethics panel, said any records requested by the staff were seen as "important" in what he described as a two-pronged focus of the Senate investigation.

The staff, he said, had been instructed both to investigate allegations of improper conduct by members of the Senate and also to determine "how this particular set of (Korean) agents tried to influence senators."

The staff's interest in Tower's records grew from the latter's

of the inquiry. Schmitt repeated Stevenson's assertion that no allegations of impropriety had been lodged with the committee against Tower.

**ASKED ABOUT** leaving the committee, Tower initially said that he had disqualified himself because he had been "acquainted" with some of the individuals suspected as agents of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, including Tongsun Park, the indicted millionaire rice dealer.

He added that there never had been any "illegal, unethical or improper advances to me" by any of the Koreans with whom he has had dealings during his nearly 17 years in the Senate.

"I have taken this action in order to preserve the credibility of the review by the committee, and will cooperate fully with the committee in all matters before it," he said.

Asked last night whether he had had any option under the rules but to remove himself from the committee after his records were sought, Tower replied, "The way I interpreted the rules, I did not. I would have gotten off even if there had been no rule."

Tower leaves the committee as most of its members begin to see for the first time the fruits of the preliminary staff inquiry.

Tongsun Park, brought back to the United States from South Korea under a grant of immunity, is scheduled to begin testifying in closed session before the committee next week after completing a two-week-long appearance before the House ethics committee.